

Special Focus:

- State Department hosts Our Ocean Conference
- Regional Environmental Hubs engage on Our Ocean

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Welcome from the OES Acting Assistant Secretary



Welcome to the OES Hub Report! This collaborative effort of the Department of State's Regional Environmental Hub offices (Hubs) around the world and the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) highlights the important work that we do together to advance our environment, science, technology and health objectives. Our regional Hub teams are actively engaged on many important issues, from science, technology and innovation, to climate change, oceans and water partnerships. In June of this year Secretary Kerry hosted the Our Ocean conference to raise attention and generate action to protect our ocean from overfishing, marine pollution, and acidification. Our Hub teams play a vital role in building partnerships across the U.S. government, and with regional and host government institutions and publics to address critical issues such as the challenges facing our ocean. This newsletter showcases some of the good work they're doing. Enjoy!

As Secretary of State John Kerry stated in his welcoming remarks at the Our Ocean conference, “the connection between a healthy ocean and life itself for every single person on Earth cannot be overstated.” Through the conference, we aimed to elevate attention to these issues to the broadest audience in the United States and around the world, and to build awareness and support for action at the highest levels of government. By all measures, the conference did just that—conference participants committed more than \$1.8 billion to support action on oceans and climate change, and extended protections to a vast expanse of ocean. Three heads of state, six foreign ministers as well as policy makers, environmentalists, scientists, and entrepreneurs from nearly 90 countries participated. The conference ‘Thunderclap’ reached over 6.5 million social media users on the opening day of the conference and Our Ocean was a top trending on Twitter! Embassies hosted viewing parties throughout the conference, extending the reach of conference attendance. Collaboration among the Hubs, Foreign Service officers and Locally Engaged Staff working on Environment, Science, Technology and Health issues at U.S. Embassies, and our OES-based team proved essential. This issue of the OES Hub Report highlights only a few of the efforts that contributed to the conference’s success.



There is more information available on the conference website www.state.gov/ourocean. There you can find videos of the entire proceedings including remarks by Leonardo DiCaprio, the Secretary's Call to Action and the Public Service Announcement on marine pollution by Jack Johnson.

As we look to our next steps, our team will continue the momentum, build public engagement, and carry through on conference commitments to do our part and more to help Our Ocean.



Regional Environment and Climate Change Policy Specialist Sandeep Singh (far right) speaks to primary school children on the theme of ocean conservation.

Photo credit: Embassy Suva Public Affairs Section

Pacific Islands: Embassy Suva

The Regional Environment Office (REO) for the Pacific in collaboration with the Regional Public Affairs Office celebrated World Oceans Day 2014 with students at a Fijian primary school. Regional Environment & Climate Change Policy Specialist Sandeep Singh and REO Rangel Fellow Lisa Hahn spoke on the importance of all nations taking more action and working together to protect the world's oceans. The duo also sang a song about ocean conservation to the delight of the young audience.

REO participation at the event highlighted the importance of expanding environmental education at all levels and encouraging students to make stewardship of the ocean and broader environment a part of their daily lives. Students delivered speeches on the topic of ocean conservation. The best speakers received books from the visiting guests.



Photo credit: Andres Camacho, Embassy Lima Public Affairs Section

South America: Embassy Lima

Embassy Lima and a local environmental NGO, Life Out of Plastic (L.O.O.P.), organized a half-day program to commemorate World Oceans Day with public school children in the beach community of San Bartolo, 27 miles south of Lima (photo left). Approximately 100 children took part in a variety of fun and educational classroom and beach activities focused on the importance of ocean conservation. Kids learned about the need to protect the ocean from trash and plastic litter that flows down streets, harming and killing marine life and polluting marine food sources.



Photo credit: Eladio Ramirez, Embassy San Jose Public Affairs Section

Central America and the Caribbean: Embassy San Jose

As part of World Oceans Day, the Regional Environmental Hub for Central America and the Caribbean organized a video chat about the marine and ocean conservation and its challenges. Costa Rican Vice Minister of Seas and Coastal Wetlands Fernando Mora, biologist and advisor to NGO Forever Costa Rica Leonardo Garcia, and U.S. Embassy Information Specialist Evelyn Ardon (see photo, left to right) discussed the efforts of Costa Rica and the United States to conserve important marine ecosystems and resources. You can see the talk on U.S. Embassy San Jose's YouTube page.



USPACOM Brigadier General Mark McLeod (right) and a group of school students are briefed on sustainable environmental island practices

Photo credit: Maldives National Defense Force

South Asia: Embassy Kathmandu

The U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) and the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) partnered in holding a regional environmental security forum in the Maldives focused on building resiliency to climate change, strengthening regional environmental security partnerships, and identifying opportunities for best practices in sustainable environmental management. Regional Environmental Officer Ari Nathan worked closely with USPACOM and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to identify forum participants and speakers and build partnerships. Resiliency to climate change is particularly critical for the Maldives, a small island nation of over 1,190 islands, which is already seeing the impact of climate change in eroding coastlines and changing rainfall patterns. Forum participants visited Thulusdhoo Island to learn how local communities reclaim coastlines as the island has been significantly impacted by coastal erosion. Participants also learned about waste management, another challenge on the island (see photo left). The forum featured over 80 participants from ten countries.

Pacific Islands: Embassy Suva

U.S. Embassy Suva's REO and Regional Public Diplomacy Office supported the Fiji W.I.S.E (Workshop in International Science Education) marine conservation workshop that brought together international students and young conservationists from the United States, Fiji, New Zealand, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea to discuss topics such as climate change and ocean acidification. To broaden their understanding of the breadth of ocean conservation challenges, the group also dissected fish for research purposes and went on a snorkeling excursion to a marine protected area near Suva. The five-day workshop was conducted through a partnership between the University of the South Pacific and Columbia University. The course was led by Dr. Joshua Drew from Columbia University who also works on marine protected area projects in Fiji.



Dr. Joshua Drew (center) talks with students representing multiple Pacific Island countries

Photo credit: Embassy Suva Public Affairs Section

Did you know?

During Our Ocean conference dates, #OurOcean2014 appeared in a total of 34,271 tweets from 22,463 users.



Engaging on Twitter

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry participates in a Twitter Question & Answer (Q&A) with Bill Nye, the Science Guy, during the Our Ocean conference on June 17, 2014. The #OceanChat hashtag used for the Twitter Q&A with Nye trended on the morning of June 17, demonstrating that a high number of Twitter users were engaged in the conversation.

Photo credit: State Department Public Affairs



Meetup

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry greets Our Ocean Meetup group participants. The participants were selected from a list of applicants to attend the Our Ocean conference at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. on June 16, 2014.

Photo credit: State Department Public Affairs



Alex Muñoz of Oceana gives a presentation on key challenges & solutions to sustainable fishing in Chile

*Photo credit: Andrew Chapman, Embassy Santiago
Political/Economic Section*

Viewing Parties

U.S. Embassies organized viewing parties to watch sessions of the Our Ocean conference in the following cities:

- Guatemala City, Guatemala
- London, United Kingdom
- Managua, Nicaragua
- Manila, Philippines
- Mexico City, Mexico
- Panama City, Panama
- Santiago, Chile
- Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Participants included students, ambassadors, government representatives, subject-matter experts (both local and those from Washington), professors, local celebrities and NGOs.

The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, often referred to as "Oceans, Environment and Science" or "OES," was created in 1974 by Congress. OES works to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in such critical areas as climate change, wildlife trafficking, water, polar issues, oceans policy, infectious diseases, science and technology, and space policy, to name a few.

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